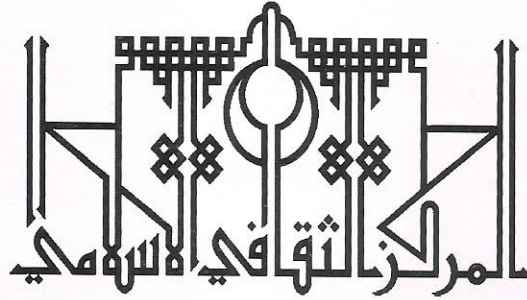


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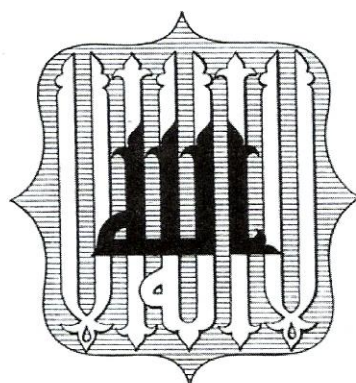
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Moriscos: A Nation of Tearful Destiny

Zubair Zafar Khan*

Abstract

This research paper is an attempt to present the religio-political conditions of Moriscos as a minority in Christian Spain after the Muslim rule.

Fall of Muslim rule

The Islamic period of Spain lasted from 711 to 1492. In 929 the Emir of Cordoba (Abd ar-Rahman III), leader of the Umayyad Dynasty, declared himself "Caliph", independent of the Abbasids in Baghdad. He took all military, religious and political power and reorganised the army and the bureaucracy.

Later, Abd ar-Rahman's grandson became a puppet in the hands of his vizier (minister) al-Mansur. Al-Mansur waged several campaigns attacking and sacking Burgos, Leon, Pamplona, Barcelona and Santiago de Compostela before his death in 1002.¹

With his death began the decline of Islamic rule in Spain. After the death of al-Mansur his son al-Muzaffar succeeded, beginning what is known as the Taifa (petty kingdoms). Many governors of large cities distant from the capital (Cordoba) declared independent states. As a result, wars broke out amongst these petty rulers. Al-Andalus suffered many such wars, ending in the appearance of the Taifa kingdoms. There were at least thirty-five small kingdoms that rivalled and competed with one another but the most shocking fact was that they allied themselves with Christian rulers, which

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made the latter's dream of taking the land back from the Muslims all the easier.²

It would have been virtually impossible for the Christians to fight the combined armies of all the forces of Muslim Spain but much simpler to fight small kingdoms and defeat the Muslims gradually. Without a central authority and with rulers too busy indulging in luxuries, the ranks of Muslims were easily picked off one by one. Thus, the wheel for the conquest of Spain was set in motion, starting with the massacre of Muslim civilians. Barbastro, at the foot of the Pyrenees, was taken in 1064 by Christians and, after a long siege, the surviving civilians were massacred in thousands. Most shocking of all was the rape of women in front of their families.³

After a seven-year siege, Toledo fell into the hands of Alfonso VI, who proclaimed himself 'Emperor of Spain' and planned raids against all the Muslim kingdoms in the land.⁴ The fall of Toledo was the beginning of the end of Islamic rule in Spain. Toledo was the first domino.⁵ As the major city of central Spain, it proved an ideal base from which the remainder of Spain could be returned into the hands of the Christians.⁶ Almost as suddenly as the sun of Islam rose upon the Iberian Peninsula, it was now fast declining. Following these events the reformist movement of the Almoravids came with religious zeal aimed at reinvigorating Islam in Spain. They made a concerted effort to realign the kings to their way of governance, which unfortunately was to be ruled from North Africa and not Spain. From 1145, they defeated various rulers. Algarciras was conquered and they then occupied Seville and Malaga.⁷ The Muwahidun followed Almoravids with similar zeal to defeat the Christians. Muwahidun height was under Abu Yusuf Yaqub. He became the leader in 1184 and his greatest victory was at the battle of Alarcos in 1195 against the forces organised by Pope Innocent III. It was said that the Christians lost 146,000 and more than 30,000 were taken prisoner. Unfortunately, this victory was not exploited because Toledo was open to attack; but there was no attack and this gave the Christians a chance to re-group. It wasn't until nearly 16 years later that his son, Muhammad an-Nasr, tried to belatedly take advantage but the advantage was lost. An-Nasr gathered a huge army of 600,000 and, ignoring the advice of his generals, more than half a million

of them were slaughtered. This defeat meant that Muslims could not re-take the land that was lost to the Christians over two hundred years of reversal. Cordoba fell in 1236 followed by Valencia in 1238 and Seville in 1248. The Kingdom of Granada remained and this was the final stand of the Spanish Caliphate. The Bani Nasr were descendants of the companion Sa'ad ibn Ubaydah and their chief was Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Ahmar. It was known as the Nasrid Kingdom, which ruled Granada until 1492.

As the decay continued, so did the re-taking of land by the Christians. Malaga and its surrounding areas were taken by 1487 and only the citadel of Granada remained in 1489. The prince at the time, Abu Abdullah or Boabdil, surrendered the citadel after a siege of seven months. Musa, one of the military commanders, refused to capitulate and rode out to attack the Christians, dying a martyr. The treaty was signed on 25th November 1491 and the gates were opened on 2nd January 1492.⁸ Boabdil was allowed to leave with whatever he could and, just before he left, he gave Granada once last glance. He sighed and began to cry. It became known as 'el ultimo suspiro del Moro' or the Moors last sigh and his mother's response was a withering, "Do not weep like a woman for what you could not defend like a man".⁹ This was the end of Islamic rule in Spain. Boabdil crossed to the Maghreb and settled in Fez, where he was said to have been killed in battle fighting for his kinsman, the ruler of Fez. The spot from which Boabdil looked for the last time on Granada is still known as the last sigh of the Moor.¹⁰

The Muslim leadership had gone but the Muslims were still present in large numbers.

Capitulation of Granada

The treaty signed by Boabdil on surrendering the citadel of Granada contained many articles. The capitulation of 1492 contained sixty-seven articles,¹¹ some of which are as follows:

- The Muslims both great and small should be perfectly secure in their persons, families, and properties.

- They should be allowed to continue in their dwellings and residences, whether in the city, the suburbs or any other part of the country.
- Their laws should be preserved as they were before and no one should judge them except by those same laws.
- Their mosques and the religious endowments appertaining to them should remain as they were in the times of Islam.
- No Christian should enter the house of a Muslim or insult him in any way.
- No Christian or Jew holding public office by the appointment of the late Sultan should be allowed to exercise his functions or rule over them.
- All Muslim captives taken during the siege of Granada, from whatever part of the country they might have come, especially the nobles and chiefs mentioned in the agreement, should be liberated.
- Such Muslim captives as might have escaped from their Christian masters and taken refuge in Granada should not be surrendered but the Sultan should be bound to pay the price of such captives to their owners.
- All those who might choose to cross over to Africa should be allowed to depart within a certain time and be conveyed there in the king's ships without any pecuniary tax being imposed on them beyond the mere charge for passage.
- After the expiration of that time, no Muslim should be hindered from departing provided he paid for, in addition to the price of his passage, whatever property he might carry along with him.
- No one should be prosecuted or punished for the crime of another man.
- The Christians who had embraced Islam should not be compelled to relinquish it and adopt their former creed.
- Any Muslim wishing to become a Christian should be allowed some days to consider the step he was about to

take, after which he should be questioned by both a Muslim and a Christian judge concerning his intended change and, if after this examination he still refused to return to Islam, he should be permitted to follow his own inclination.

- No Muslim should be prosecuted for the death of a Christian slain during the siege and no restitution for property taken during the war should be enforced.
- No Muslim should be subjected to Christian soldiers billeted upon him or be transported to provinces of this kingdom against his will.
- No increase should be made to the usual imposts but, on the contrary, all the oppressive taxes lately imposed should be immediately cancelled.
- No Christian should be allowed to peek over the wall or into the house of a Muslim or enter a mosque.
- Any Muslim choosing to travel or reside among the Christians should be perfectly secure in his person and property.
- No badge or distinctive mark shall be put upon them, as was done with the Jews and Mudejars.
- No muezzin should be interrupted in the act of calling the people to prayer (adhan) and no Muslim molested in the performance of his daily devotions, in the observance of his fast or in any other religious ceremony but, if a Christian should be found laughing at him, he should be punished for it.
- The Muslims should be exempt from all taxation for a certain number of years.
- The Lord of Rome, the Pope, should be requested to give his assent to the above conditions, and sign the treaty himself.

The Moriscos

The treaty of 1492 was an attempt to win religious tolerance for all the Muslims left in Spain. They were no longer the rulers of the country but it

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was hoped that they would at least be permitted to worship Allah in the manner prescribed by the Prophet Muhammad. These hopes were strengthened when the treaty was ratified by Ferdinand and Isabella with a solemn declaration made several months later on 29th November, 1492. They swore by God that all Muslims should have full liberty of faith, work and trade. Muslims were to be regarded as free subjects of the crown with the free exercise of their own religion. However, the Inquisitors were not at happy with the treaty that Ferdinand and Isabella had ratified. By the end of the fifteenth century they had reduced the Muslim population and practice of Islam considerably. The treaty had only slowed down their operations, but it was likely that Muslims might become strong again and attempt to rebel. Furthermore, they were convinced that the Muslims would never be converted by peaceful means. Cardinal Ximenes, the Archbishop of Toledo, was eager to continue the activities of the Spanish Inquisition unimpeded and he finally received permission to do so.

In 1499, at the invitation of Ferdinand and Isabella, Ximenes began a campaign to coerce the Muslims of southern Andalusia into the official religion (Christianity).

As a result of his endeavours, it is reported that on 18th December, 1499 about three thousand Muslims were baptised by him but in name only and, because of this, they were given the insulting title Morisco, which means little Muslim.¹² Moreover, the largest mosque of Granada was converted into the Christian church of Nuestra Senora De La O.¹³ Converts were encouraged to surrender their Islamic books, several thousand of which were destroyed by Ximenes in a public bonfire but a few rare books on medicine were kept aside for the University of Alcala. This was the end of Spain's prosperous age. As Prof. Richmond Surrey wrote in the preface to Stanley Lane-Poole's book *The Muslims in Spain*, "Then followed the abomination of desolation, the rule of Inquisition and the blackness of darkness in which Spain has been plunged ever since. In the land where science was once supreme, Spanish doctors became noted for nothing but their ignorance and incapacity and the discoveries of Newton and Harvey were condemned as pernicious to the Faith. Where once seventy public libraries had fed the minds of scholars and half a million books has (sic)

been gathered at Cordova for the benefit of the world, such indifference to learning afterwards prevailed that the new capital of Madrid possessed no public library in the Eighteenth century. The sixteen thousand looms of Seville soon dwindled to a fifth of their ancient number. The arts and industries of Toledo and Almeria faded into insignificance and the public baths were closed because cleanliness savoured too strongly of rank infidel.¹⁴ The land, deprived of skilful irrigation by Muslims, became impoverished and the richest and most fertile valleys were deserted. Most of the populous cities of al-Andalus fell into ruinous decay. Beggars, friars and bandits took the place of scholars, merchants and knights. So low did Spain fall when she had driven away the Moors. Such is the melancholy contrast offered by her history.”¹⁵

Eventually, tyranny began. When a young Muslim girl was being dragged through the streets of the Muslim quarter, she cried out that she was about to be forcibly baptised in contravention of the terms of the treaty.¹⁶ A crowd collected, her captors were attacked and a riot and momentary uprising of the Muslims was the result. They besieged the house of Ximenes and, after three days fighting, negotiations were opened.

The Muslims stated that they had not risen against the king, but against the officials who had broken the king's word. They could not be contradicted and, initially, peace was promised. Further promise was given that the terms of the original treaty would again be honoured but it soon became clear that this was solely a means of restoring order and there was no intention to abide by this promise.

Ximenes immediately denounced the uprising as a rebellion and claimed that Muslims had forfeited all their rights under the terms of capitulation. They should therefore be given the choice between baptism and expulsion. The government agreed with his arguments and Ximenes then began the mass baptism of the population of Granada, most of whom preferred this fate to the more hazardous one of deportation to Africa. The speed with which the baptisms were carried out meant that there was no time to instruct the Moors in the fundamentals of their new religion so that, inevitably, most of the new converts became Christian in name only.

It is estimated that between 50,000 and 70,000 Muslims were forcibly baptised in the mass baptism of Granada by Ximenes. It is not known how many were deported to Africa, but the number was probably small, not only because it was made difficult to leave but also because the Muslims were not prepared to relinquish their kingdom so easily. The Moriscos were disarmed during Ximenes mass baptism, thereby leaving them defenceless and open to attack from Christians who saw it as their religious duty to kill Muslims. Armies of Christian militia randomly attacked Muslim areas. In Andarax, a mosque in which women and children had taken refuge was burnt down.¹⁷ In Belfrique, all the men were killed and the women were taken as slaves. The misfortune of three Muslim girls of Jaen is depicted in the following poem:

“Three Moorish girls enchant me in Jaen,
Axa, Fatima and Marien,
Three graceful Moorish girls,
Went picking olives,
And found them stripped,
And turned away tight-lipped,
And changed complexion in Jaen,
Axa, Fatima and Marien.”¹⁸

Children were taken from their parents and sold into slavery never to be seen again.¹⁹ If Muslims wanted to leave, they had to pay a fee but people who had converted were not allowed to leave.²⁰ There was also the massacre of the Muslim population in Lisbon that lasted three days and nights.²¹ Muslims were told to keep their doors open during Fridays, Saturdays, weddings and celebrations²² and a Christian midwife had to be present during birth of a child, thus preventing the adhan (call to prayer) being whispered into the newborn's ear.²³ The Grand Mufti of Oran, Ahmad ibn Abu Juma'a, issued a fatwa in 1504 that allowed Muslims to act like Christians and accept the Christian faith on their tongues so long as they rejected it in their hearts.²⁴ Faith in Islam was defined as belief in the heart with affirmation on the tongue (also performing actions by the limbs) so the affirmation of the Christian faith did not mean anything so long as

they did not believe it in their hearts. This was dispensation given to Muslims in a life-or-death situation.

The survivors were always forcibly baptised, thus preparing them for further persecution from the Spanish Inquisition at a later date, and all books in Arabic, especially the Qur'an, were collected and burnt. It is reported that Cardinal Ximenes, during his conversion campaign among the Granada Muslims in 1500, burned over 1,005,000 volumes including rare works of Muslim culture in the public square of Vivarrambla..

The last community of Muslims in Andalusia was thus smashed and fragmented within a very short space of time. By 1501, it was officially assumed that the Kingdom of Granada had become a realm of Christian Moors (Moriscos). Ferdinand granted the Moriscos legal equality with Christians just to exempt Moriscos from the treaty of Granada but, at the same time, disarmed the population for fear of further risings. In 1502, the Muslims of Granada were forced to choose between baptism and exile.²⁵

Behind their words of conciliation and peace was hidden the general intention of the Church to eliminate the practice of Islam. Now that the Muslims of southern Andalusia, or the Moriscos as they were called, were within the jurisdiction of the Spanish Inquisition, the Inquisitors embarked on the task of detecting 'relapsed heretics' and secret Muslims.²⁶ The Muslim communities that survived the suppression of the rebellion or reformed after it were repeatedly harassed by the Inquisitors. The Inquisitors would confiscate the land of anyone they suspected not being a true Christian and anyone else they suspected of being dangerous. They used many different methods of torture and the most famous was the 'auto de fe', which was the burning the accused at the stake.²⁷

The other methods of torture used by the Inquisition included *garrucha*, *toca* and *potro*. The application of the *garrucha* also known as the *strappado*, consisted of suspending the victim from the ceiling by the wrists, which were tied behind his back. Sometimes weights were tied to the ankles with a series of lifts and drops, during which the arms and legs suffered violent pulls and were sometimes dislocated.²⁸ The *toca*, also called *interrogatorio mejorado del agua*, consisted of introducing a cloth

into the mouth of the victim and forcing him to dip his head in a water-filled jar so that he had a feeling of drowning.²⁹ The *potro*, was the instrument of torture used most frequently.³⁰ The Spanish Inquisition did not discriminate between women and men. Even if the women were pregnant this did not matter. They would torture them for days, weeks and sometimes months. Mosques were changed into churches, some were destroyed and people were prevented from bathing.³¹ Families were broken up further with children separated from their families. Some were sent to priests to learn Christianity but most were sold as slaves.³²

In 1567 Philip II changed policy. He directed Moriscos to give up their Muslim names and traditional Muslim dress and prohibited speaking Arabic, use of Henna and the celebration of traditional festivals.³³ In addition, their children were to be educated by Christian priests. The edict issued by Phillip II in 1567 forbade the customs, language of the Muslims (Arabic) and Muslim clothes. The use of hijab (veil) by women was proscribed.³⁴ The public baths were finally closed and destroyed and people forgot the custom of washing themselves in Spain in the 16th century.

In reaction, there was a Morisco uprising in the Alpujarras from 1568 to 1571. Philip Don Juan put down the rebellion in 1569 by force. He and his forces massacred the three thousand men, women and children in Gelera. As he did in Alpujarras, he butchered the inhabitants and razed the villages to the ground.³⁵ For this, the Pope called him 'a champion of Christianity'.³⁶ The survivors were sold into slavery and exiled but they were few.³⁷ Twenty thousand were massacred and a further seventy thousand were butchered during the celebrations of All Saints Day in 1570.³⁸ These massacres were the worst acts of religious intolerance in history. Muslims did not do this to Christians. There were no massacres committed by the Muslims who came to Spain in 711. Acts of genocide and violence on this large scale were rarely repeated in Europe. As the Crusaders were sent home during the 13th century, this internal crusade continued until there was no one left to kill.³⁹

Expulsion of Moriscos

Finally, on 9th April, 1609, the edict was signed to expel the Moriscos.⁴⁰ The government knew that exiling so many would be problematic. It was decided to start with Valencia, where the Morisco population was greatest. Preparations were taken in the strictest secrecy. Starting in September, battalions arrived from Italy.⁴¹ They took up positions in the main ports of Valencia: Alfaques, Dénia, and Alicante. On 22nd September, the viceroy ordered the publication of the decree. The Valencian aristocracy met the government to protest the expulsion, as losing their workers would ruin their agricultural incomes. The government offered some of the confiscated property and territory of the Moriscos to them in exchange, but that didn't come close to compensating for the loss. The Moriscos would be allowed to take anything they could carry, but their homes and land would pass into the hands of their masters. Burning or other destruction of their homes before the transfer was prohibited.⁴²

Certain exceptions were granted: 6 families out of every 100 would be allowed to stay behind and maintain the infrastructure of towns that had been predominantly Morisco.⁴³ Very few took advantage of this, considering that they would likely be exiled later anyway. Additionally, the exile was optional for children under 4 years-old.⁴⁴ This was later expanded to 16 years-old. Archbishop Ribera strongly opposed this part of the measure. He argued that, at the very least, children should be separated from their parents, enslaved and Christianised "for the good of their souls".⁴⁵ Gerald Bernan describes a village baptism in these words: "On returning (from church) to the parent's house the godmother would say 'Comrade, here is your son. You gave him to me a Moor and I hand him back to you a Christian'".⁴⁶

On 30th September the first of the exiles were taken to the ports where, as a last insult, they were forced to pay their own fare for the trip.⁴⁷ The Moriscos were transported to North Africa, where at times they were attacked as invaders by the people of the recipient countries. At times, small revolts broke out on the ships, causing some of the exiles to be slain in battle with the crew. This caused fear in the Morisco population remaining in Valencia and on 20th October there was a rebellion against the

expulsions. The rebels numbered 6,000 and held the remote valleys of Ayora and Muela de Cortes. Five days later, a new rebellion broke out on the south coast, with 15,000 rebels holding the Valley of Lugar.⁴⁸

The rebels were defeated by November. In only three months, 116,000 Moriscos had been transported to North Africa from Valencia. The start of 1610 saw the expulsion of the Moriscos of Aragon (the specific area of Aragon, not all the lands of the old Crown of Aragon). 41,952 were sent to North Africa via Alfaques and 13,470 were sent over the Pyrenees Mountains to France. The exasperated French sent most of them to the port of Agde and those who took the land route were charged both the transit fee and the sea fare.⁴⁹ In September, the Moriscos of Catalonia were exiled. Andalusia exiled some 32,000 Moriscos as well.⁵⁰

The expulsion of the Moriscos of Castile was the most difficult task because they were dispersed across the land after being broken in 1571 by the rebellion, rather than being concentrated in any one place. Because of this, the Moriscos were given a first option of voluntary departure, being allowed to take their most valuable possessions and anything else that might sell. In Castile the expulsion lasted three years, from 1611 to 1614. Perhaps 32,000 Moriscos left in total. According to Danvila Y Colorado, about 467,500 Moriscos were expelled from Spain between 1609 and 1614.⁵¹ Some even managed to evade expulsion and stayed in Spain; it is estimated that perhaps 10,000 Moriscos remained in Spain after the expulsion was officially completed, mostly in Castile.⁵² Henry Charles Lea reported in his work *History of Spanish Inquisition*: "The rich Moriscos were required to pay for the poor and the commissioners were cruel in their exactions, making them pay for the water in their brooks and the shade of the trees in their long summer journeys, beside[s] exacting from them as wages much more than was due. France closed its doors for them to emigration. (sic) There was one body of some fourteen hundred souls that was refused admission by France after they had reached on (sic) the border. They had paid forty thousand Ducats for permission to go to France, beside the export duties on what they carried and the expense of the commissioners in charge of them. Then they [were] forced to turn back on the long road to the Alfaques, so many of them sickened and died

in the summer heat that it was feared that they would bring pestilence to the ships. In short, the story of the exodus from Aragon is one of heartless greed and reckless inhumanity".⁵³

On the whole, Islam remained banned until 1975 when it was 'allowed' again. Many families who hid their faith for centuries came out as Muslims. According national statistics, about one million Muslims live in Spain today, constituting 2.3% of the population.⁵⁴ Many are from migrant communities living and working in Spain. Islam in Spain is wrongly understood to be from 711 to 1492. It should read from 711 to today because Islam is still there. When we look back at history, we normally feel sadness at the loss of Spain but all that was really lost was the political power. It also behoves us to look at history using eyes that do not concentrate on a single event or events but look at the whole period. Islam as a religion survives in modern Spain. The blood of the martyrs who fought and the Moriscos who died needlessly was not in vain. Notwithstanding all the centuries of effort by the Christians, Islam was never removed from the hearts of the people. It remained there like a flag blowing in the storms but never coming down. People should realise that land can be conquered very easily but hearts cannot not conquered completely, except by the truth.

Conclusion

The history of Muslim Spain (al-Andalus) is a bright chapter of Islamic history with regard not only to intellectual progress but also the liberal nature of its society. All three communities (Muslims, Christians and Jews) in al-Andalus, were living in complete harmony with one another. There was no forced conversion, expulsion, inquisition or discriminating behaviour with Christians and Jews in Muslim-ruled Spain, unlike what was done after the end of Muslim rule. After the Islamic rule, when Christian emperors gained power, they practised extreme intolerance against Muslims and Jews. Initially many Muslims were baptised by peaceful means but, when that proved unsuccessful, a forced policy and harsh methods were adopted. There was the option of conversion or exile. Many of the Muslims expelled and those who converted were more unfortunate. Then came the horrific age of the Inquisition, in which worse

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crimes were committed against newly-converted Christians (Moriscos). Therefore, it is one of the darkest chapters in history.

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